

Sports Safety Fact Sheet

Organized sports are a vital part of the lives of school age children and teens. The number of different sports supported by cities and towns, junior high and senior high schools has increased significantly. Sports are the most frequent cause of injuries for both male and female adolescents. Although the vast majority of these injuries will be minor, some will be quite severe or cause chronic health conditions. One in four Massachusetts teens will be seen annually in the emergency department or admitted to the hospital for a sports-related injury. Seventeen percent of all hospital treated injuries of 0-19 year olds are sports related. Twice as many male adolescents as females are involved in sports-related injuries. Team sports are the most frequent cause of sports injury, individual sports the most severe.

SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY GOALS

- require coaches to be trained and certified in each sport they coach;
- require pre-participation physicals for all athletes;
- require, maintain and improve protective equipment;
- collect and maintain injury data from all practices and games;
- maintain and improve the surfaces of public playing fields;
- inform parents and athletes of specific risks and protective strategies;
- require helmets and mouthguards for contact sports;¹ and
- use community resources to develop clinics that assist athletes and coaches with training and conditioning.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Athletic trainers, coaches, instructors, and school nurses should share their injury reports, analyze the results and identify local injury patterns. Parents and administrators should advocate and enforce association rules that promote safety. Schools should provide athletic trainers or medical personnel at all events and practices. Athletic departments can host a "Sports Night", an evening when parents and athletes are informed of the various athletic opportunities, introduced to staff, review the causes and nature of injuries associated with specific sports, how to ensure a proper fit of protective equipment and other strategies for preventing injuries. Create a list of your community's sports fields and playgrounds. Check them for hazards. These would include, glass, rocks, debris, pot holes, and movable soccer goals which are not secured as they may tip over when climbed on and cause injuries. See <http://www.cpsc.gov> for the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission's guidelines on movable soccer goals.

SPECIAL NOTE: April is National Youth Sports Injury Prevention Month and Sports Eye Safety Month; October is Head Injury Awareness Month.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Injury Prevention and Control Program, DPH

Phone: 617-624-5413 Fax: 617-624-5075 Website: <http://www.mass.gov/dph/fch/injury/>

National Youth Sports Safety Foundation

Phone: 617-367-6677 Website: <http://www.nyssf.org>

Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association

Phone: 508-541-7997 Website: <http://www.miaa.net>

¹ The Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) regulates the use of mouth guards during specific sporting activities. In Massachusetts, mouth guards are currently required in seven scholastic sports — football, field hockey, ice hockey, lacrosse, soccer, wrestling, and basketball.

In addition to these sports, the Massachusetts Dental Society (MDS) recommends that participants wear mouth guards in all sports in which injury to the mouth may occur, including baseball, volleyball, and other contact sports.